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SUBJECT: DAS KROL MEETS WITH TAJIK AND KYRGYZ FOREIGN
MINISTERS AND LITHUANIAN POL DIRECTOR IN ATHENS

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Carol S. Fuller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶11. (C) In a series of meetings on the margins of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Athens on December 1, SCA DAS George Krol met with the Foreign Ministers of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as well as the Political Director from the Lithuanian MFA ahead of Lithuania's 2011 Chairmanship of the OSCE. Tajik FM largely complained about Uzbek behavior in withdrawing from the power grid while the Kyrgyz FM pushed for the Bishkek Initiative to play a role in addressing Afghanistan issues. The Lithuanian Political Director offered insights into dealing with Kazakhstan as it embarks on its Chairmanship of the OSCE. End summary.

MEETING WITH TAJIK FOREIGN MINISTER

¶12. (C) At the outset, Tajik Foreign Minister Hamrohon Zarifi raised Uzbekistan's withdrawal from the Central Asia Power grid, which he said Uzbekistan did before winter as a calculated political move. He said no one, including President Karimov, knows about the large number of electro-transmission lines in Tajikistan and at this rate, Tajikistan would be completely using its own power stations by May. "We will suffer this winter, and the summer will also be bad." Zarifi said that Tajikistan informed Turkmenistan about limits to the summer water flow, but that "no one will be able to convince President Karimov, it is not logical." He said the Tajik President was tired of trying to explain things to Karimov and asked the U.S. to speak to the Uzbeks about the 'real situation.'

¶13. (C) DAS Krol told Zarifi he discussed Uzbekistan leaving the power grid with both Uzbeks and Turkmen on a recent visit to the region. He said Uzbek officials told him the situation "had been developing" and Uzbekistan felt it had to remove itself from the electrical grid because it was damaging their system (Ref A). DAS Krol said Uzbek officials claimed the situation was not permanent and there would be developments to resolve it. He also told Zarifi that Turkmen President Berdimukhamidov was sympathetic but realized the situation depended on Turkmenistan's relationship with Uzbekistan. Krol said the U.S. would have further talks with Uzbekistan's senior leadership on the matter.

¶14. (C) DAS Krol told Zarifi the U.S. looked forward to developing bilateral consultations with Tajikistan and added that in the first part of next year, the U.S. may try to

bring a delegation to Dushanbe; he stressed, however, that there would need to be a clear agenda ahead of time. On upcoming elections, Krol said he hoped the government welcomed the participation of election observers.

¶5. (C) Zarifi asked for the U.S. to fully engage in supplying goods under the 'new agreement' and said Tajikistan will have more capacity to assist, in terms of infrastructure, from their airport, in the transmission of non-military goods to Afghanistan. He also asked for help in eliminating anti-personnel mines on the border with Uzbekistan, which he said Uzbekistan did not want to recognize. Zarifi said Tajikistan would like to construct a new bridge for which it needs serious support in constructing a transmission line through Afghanistan to Pakistan. He added that Tajikistan also needed help with its minorities - as all their schools had closed.

MEETING WITH KYRGYZ FOREIGN MINISTER

¶6. (C) In his meeting with Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Kadyrbek Sarbaev, the FM repeatedly emphasized Kyrgyz concerns that the U.S. was preparing to exit Afghanistan within the next three to five years. He said it was essential to put stable and peaceful Afghan structures in place before a departure or the U.S. would leave behind an unruly, lawless state. He said President Obama's plan to increase troop strength in Afghanistan was the correct decision, but also noted that solving the Afghan problem was not only a question of having military forces in place.

THE BISHKEK INITIATIVE

¶7. (C) Sarbaev stressed the Bishkek Initiative as a powerful

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tool towards that end and said there were Taliban groups watching the initiative's progress, groups that were interested in coming to the table for dialogue. DAS Krol asked Sarbaev whether he had discussed the Bishkek Initiative with either the Uzbeks or Kazakhs in light of their thoughts on discussions about Afghanistan. Sarbaev replied that the Bishkek Initiative was not in competition with other proposals. However, he noted that the Uzbek stance on bilateral talks (vice multilateral) was not a good approach. On the other hand, he felt that the Kazakh chairmanship of the OSCE next year would help make Afghanistan one of the key OSCE issues in 2010.

¶8. (C) Asked about Chinese opinion on Afghanistan, Sarbaev said the Chinese were being cagey while they study the proposals at hand. In his opinion, China will inevitably become involved - economic interests in the areas are too large for them not to do so. He said small indications of such future Chinese involvement were already becoming evident through articles in Chinese press, and beyond.

MEETING WITH LITHUANIAN POLITICAL DIRECTOR

¶9. (C) In DAS Krol's meeting with Lithuanian MFA Political Director Eitvydas Bajarunas and Ambassador at Large Rytis Paulauskas, the conversation largely focused on best ways for Lithuania to work with and manage Kazakhstan in the EU Troika in the next two years. Calling Foreign Minister Saudabayev a "night and day" difference from former Kazakhstani Foreign Minister Tazhin, Bajarunas said the new state of affairs was "quite depressing." In contrast to Saudabayev, Bajarunas said Tazhin was open minded, open to suggestion, would not hesitate to accept our ideas, and was accepting of the Human Dimension. He said Tazhin was also open to the OSCE working in Afghanistan, but he feared Saudabayev was less so.

¶10. (C) Bajarunas said the first real test of the Kazakhstani chairmanship would be seen in Kazakhstan's reaction to the approaching elections in Ukraine. The second test will be the Geneva Talks and preserving the OSCE's role in the

discussions. Bajarunas said we will need to press Kazakhstan to be more creative on Georgia. On OSCE involvement in Afghanistan, Bajarunas said Lithuania would be quite enthusiastic if Kazakhstan were to do something; especially to combat the major drug trafficking coming out of Central Asia.

¶11. (C) Paulauskas said Lithuanian was looking for the best method of working with the Kazakhstani in the OSCE Troika and developed an understanding that Kazakhstan reacted badly to anyone "trying to teach them." While Kazakhstan very much wants to be (and wants to appear to be) independent of the Russian Federation, Bajarunas pointed out that the Kazakhstani Ambassador to the OSCE told him how much better he understood the Corfu Process after receiving a briefing from Russian diplomats. He also said there was concern that Kazakhstan may use its year as Chair to try to downsize some of the OSCE missions in Central Asia; therefore, we will need continued engagement by the big powers, he said.

¶12. (C) In closing, Bajarunas said the Lithuanians "want to continue to share their knowledge about Kazakhstan," but added that because Lithuania is not well positioned in Central Asia, the GOL would greatly appreciate U.S. briefings in Vienna on the situation in Central Asia. DAS Krol assured of our willingness to do so and said Lithuanian Embassy officials in Washington were also welcomed to visit SCA.

FULLER